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WHO WERE THE FIRST MEN? BY REV. T. S. WILLIAMSON, M. D.

Wherever civilized men dwell they inquire with interest, "who were the first inhabitants of the country, and where did they come from ?" To contribute our mite toward the solution of this query in regard to Minnesota is the object of this paper.

The first Europeans who entered this Territory, subsequent to the time of Columbus found the Dakotas or Sioux as they called them, occupying most of that part of it which lies east of the Mississippi as well as that part watered by this river and the Minnesota. Charlevoix informs us that about the year 1660, two Frenchmen, after having wintered on the borders of Lake Superior, went further, even to the Sioux. These seem to have been the first Europeans who visited the Dakotas, and also, the first who entered what is now Minnesota Territory. It is not easy nor is it important to determine the exact point at which these two men found the Sioux. It is sufficient for us to know that it was somewhere in this Territory, and it is highly probable that it was near Spirit Lake or Knife Lake, near which Hennepin found them about twenty years later.

From what was written on this subject by Hennepin, La Hontan, Le Sueur , and Charlevoix , and from the maps published under the superintendence of these authors, it is sufficiently clear that in the latter part of the seventeenth century the principal residence of the Isanyati Sioux, 296 that is of the Mdewakantonwan, Warpetonwan, and Sissitonwan, (called by Hennepin *Chongasketons* , and by La Hontan *Songasketons*) was about the head waters of Rum River, whence they extended their hunts to the St. Croix, and Mississippi rivers and down the latter nearly or quite as far as the mouth of the Wisconsin. The Titonwan, called by Hennepin *Tintonha* , hunted Westward of these, between the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, and to the west and south of the latter. The Ihanktonwan

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were chiefly to the north of the Isanyati and Titonwan. A part of them, however, were to the Southwest of the Titonwan, for Le Sueur, the most reliable of all the writers concerning these matters, places the Hinhanetons in the neighborhood of the Red Pipe-Stone Quarry. The Assiniboin, called by the other Dakotas *Hoheh* , who, not long anterior to the time of which we are speaking, had separated from the Ihanktonwan, hunted to the North of the Sioux and of Lake Superior. A century later, the situation of these Indians was not very different, though they had all moved Westwardly. Within the last hundred years, most of them have proceeded much farther in the same direction.

We think it is sufficiently manifest that the Sioux occupied the better part of Minnesota when Europeans entered it, a little after the middle of the seventeenth century. It does not, however, appear that they were the first, much less the only inhabitants of the country. Their common and most reliable traditions inform us, that when their ancestors first came to the Falls of St. Anthony, the Iowas—whom they call *Ayuhba* (Drowzy)—occupied the country about the mouth of the Minnesota river, and the Shiens, called by the Dakotas *Sha-i-ena* , sometimes written by the French *Chaienne* , and by others *Shiene* , dwelt higher up on the same river. We cannot pretend to determine with certainty at what time the Sioux first came to the Falls of St. Anthony; but may say, with confidence, it was a long time ago, probably before the discovery of America by Columbus. One of the best informed men concerning their traditions that I have met with among the Dakotas, who has been dead more than ten years, when questioned on this point, told me, that they supposed it to be at least equal to the lifetime of four old men, who should live one after the other; and as an example of an old man, named his father, who, I suppose, was at the time at least eighty years old.

The Winnebagoes, Otoes, and Omahas, have been named among the nations driven by the ancestors of the Dakotas from the Minnesota valley. I have not found any evidence, satisfactory to my mind, that the Winnebagoes ever had a home in this Territory prior to their late removal into it by the United States government. As respects the Otoes and Omahas, it seems not improbable that they were reckoned as a part of the Dakota nation,

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when the Sioux first hunted on the banks of the Mississippi, and for some time after. The Anthontantas, mentioned as a part of the Nadouesiouz, by Hennepin , were probably the same people as the Otoctatas, mentioned in connection with the Ayavois, as owners of the country about Blue Earth River, in the fragment of Le Sueur , preserved by La Harpe , and again some further on, as having recently left their village in that neighborhood, and settled near the Mahas, on the Missouri River, and it is highly probable that the Otoetatas of Le Sueur , are the same people now called Ottoes or Otoes. The Mawhaws, Shiens and Sehiannesse, are mentioned by Carver , as bands of the Naudowessiex of the plains. Thus it appears that the Shiens, the Iowas,* the Omahas and the Ottoes, were the

* The Iowas, in the days of Charlevoix, appear to have lived not far from the Red Pipe atone quarry. This historian describing the pipe of peace in use among all of the Indians of North America, remarks: "It is ordinarily made of a species of red marble, very easily worked, and found beyond the Mississippi among the Aiouez" (Iowas), Hist. Nouvello France, vol. 3, page 211. (E. D. N.)

298 earliest inhabitants of Minnesota of whom we have any written or certain traditional account. I have neither seen nor heard of any artificial mounds, ancient fortifications, or monuments of any kind in or near the Minnesota valley, which might not have been constructed by these Indians. Such mounds are probably as numerous in the lower part of the valley of the Minnesota, and the contiguous part of the Mississippi, as anywhere else between the Alleghany and Rocky Mountains; but they are very small, compared with those near the Ohio, not to speak of those farther south. Some of them are still used by the Dakotas, as burying places for their dead, and in this way are receiving a small increase almost every year.

The situation of many others indicates that they had a similar origin. But by far the most numerous class appear from their size and situation, to be what Dakota tradition says they are, the remains of houses, made of poles and bark, covered with earth, such as were a few years since, and probably still are, the habitations of the Mandans, and some other tribes living on the Missouri, and also of the inhabitants of New Caledonia, as described

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by Harmon . Mounds of this class are found in clusters, of from less than half a dozen to upwards of fifty, arranged irregularly as we find the bark houses of the Indians at present. Their base usually approaches to an oval form. Their length is from ten to forty feet, and a few exceed this, with a height of from one or two feet, to three or four. Very few of this class exceed four feet; though some of those used for places of sepulture are more than twice that height. Back of them we find the land level, or nearly so, dry and fertile. In front it descends towards some water, and almost always there is a lake or morass in sight, indicating that the inhabitants depended for a subsistence partly on cultivating the earth, 299 and partly on water fowl or roots, which they obtained from wet swampy land. Several clusters of such mounds may be seen about Oak Grove, where the Dakotas say the Iowas lived, when their ancestors first came to this country. The path from Mendota to Shakopee, or Prairieville, passes through several. One large one, a little south of what has been called Black Dog's or Grey Iron's village, where the Iowas are said to have resided after they were driven from Oak Grove. Another is not far from the Tamarack swamp below Shakopee. Many may be found on the bluffs of the Mississippi and Lake Pepin. Such mounds are very numerous in the prairie near the mouth of Cannon river.

It is somewhat remarkable that the Iowas, whose language shows that they are descended from the same stock as the Dakotas, should have been viewed and treated by the Dakotas as enemies. While the Shiens, who Gallatin says have a language kindred to the Algonquin, were received as allies, and though speaking a different language were long, if they are not still counted as a part of the Dakota nation. Hence their name, *Sha-i-e-na* in the Ihanktonwan dialect, being equivalent to *Sha-i-api* in the Isanyati, both applied to those who speak a different language from the Dakotas, and applied especially to Shiens, because all others speaking a different language were counted as enemies. It is also worthy of remark, that notwithstanding the hostility between the Iowas and Sioux, the former who are called by the latter *Ayukba* , (they sleep, or "sleepy ones,") from which we probably got Iowa, remain much nearer their original location than the Shiens, or any of the other tribes, who dwelt in the Minnesota valley before the Dakotas.

When the Dakotas first came in contact with the Shiens, I have not been able to learn, farther than that the Shiens 300 formerly planted on the Minnesota, between Blue Earth and Lac-qui-Parle, whence they moved to a Western branch of Red river of the North, which still bears their name; being called by the Dakotas who hunt in that region, *Shai-e-na-wojupi*, ("the place where those of another language plant.") The various spellings of this name, all show plainly their origin from the Dakota name. From this planting place on the Chaienne, or Shienne of the North, this people removed across the Missouri, where they gave their name to another river; and having ceased to cultivate the soil, it is said they now hunt on the head waters of the Platte and of the Arkansas. From their retiring so rapidly, it is probable that the Shiens had not occupied the Minnesota valley long before the arrival of the Dakotas, and that the first inhabitants of it, if not the Iowas, were Otoes, Omahas, or some other family of the Dakota stock. The languages of the tribes just named, as well as of the Winnebagoes and Osages, are so similar to the Dakota, as to indicate a common origin. In the languages of the Mandans, Minetares and Crows or Upsarakas, so many Dakota words have been found, as to render it highly probable, that they also, in part at least, belong to the same stock.* Whatever shall establish the origin of any one of these tribes, will go far towards doing the same in regard to the others. As the Sioux were undoubtedly the principal occupants of the Territory when visited by Hennepin, and as we know more of them than of the others, our subsequent remarks will have special reference to the Dakotas.

* The ancient Arkansas seemed to have belonged to the Dakota family. A letter published in Kip's "Jesuit Missions," written by a missionary, at the mouth of Arkansas, in October, 1727, speaks of "a river which the Indians call *Ni-ska*. (*Minne-ska*) or White Water." Again: "They place the hand upon the mouth, which is a sign of admiration among them." *Ouakan-tague*, they cry out, "it is the Great Spirit." They said probably, *Wakan-de*, this is wonderful (E. D. N.)

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Various circumstances, some of which we would here mention, but for the apprehension that by so doing, this paper would be extended to an undue length, indicate that the Sioux resided long in the region where Hennepin found them. Many of them suppose that they originated there. They have a tradition, however, that their ancestors came thither from the Northeast, where they had resided on a lake. It has been generally supposed, that the lake referred to in this tradition, is Rainy Lake, or Lake of the Woods. It is more probable, however, that it was the northern shore of Lake Superior, or Hudson's Bay, or some of the lakes between those large expanses of water. The Ojibwas have a tradition, that their ancestors drove the Sioux from the shores of Lake Superior. This tradition is corroborated by the name of the Ojibwas in the Dakota language. *Hahatonwan* , signifies dwellers at the Falls, and corresponds in sense with *saulteur* , applied to the same people it is said, because of their former residence at the Sault or Falls of Saint Marie. They were probably residing there, and the Sioux hunting and fishing on the shores of Lake Superior, when this name was first given to them.